

Frequently Asked Questions about Bed Bugs

Question: How do I know if I have bed bugs?

Answer: You should become familiar with the signs of bed bugs infestation. Bites or rashes on your skin are not the best signs of bed bugs. You should look for the actual bug and their fecal droppings as signs. Bed bugs are not microscopic, but they hide very well. They can be found if you look in the proper places. The [National Pest Management Association Pest Guide](#) is available online to view pictures of the pests. [New York City's Public Health Department](#) has done an excellent job outlining areas where to find the pest (please keep in mind, this is a guide from New York City's Health Department- the numbers provided on the Web site will not be able to assist you). Often times, bed bugs will leave droppings on mattresses, a good indicator of their presence.

Question: How do I prevent myself from picking up bed bugs while traveling?

Answer: You should perform your own inspection of the room when you arrive at your destination. Bring a flashlight to view hard to see places. You should pull back the sheets and unzip the mattress cover. Inspect the box spring, headboard for signs of an infestation. Bring minimum items into your hotel room. Keep things in large plastic bags to prevent bed bug eggs from attaching to your personal belongings or picking up the adults. When you finally return home, you should wash and dry your clothes immediately. Do not allow them to set out for an extended period of time. Using hot water and high heat in the dryer will help eliminate them. A travel guide is available on the [NC Public Health Pest Management Section](#).

Question: What can I do if I have confirmed the presence of bed bugs in my house?

Answer: For further assistance, you will need to contact [NC Public Health Pest Management Section](#). They will be able to assist you with up to date information about controlling bed bugs. You should use a professional or consult a professional about treatment options. You cannot use one method for controlling bed bugs. It is best to have an integrated approach (coordinating several practices together) when dealing with bed bugs. **IMPROPER USE OF PESTICIDES IS COMMON AND CAN LEAD TO DEADLY RESULTS. YOU SHOULD ALWAYS CONSULT A PROFESSIONAL. NEVER USE AN OUTDOOR PESTICIDE FOR INSIDE USE.** You should be very wary of advice on the Internet on how to rid yourself of bed bugs. Bed bugs have become resistant to pesticides, so in

many cases, bed bugs can be a continuing problem. Many good pest control companies will help with an integrated approach for control. You can purchase a good mattress cover (thick ones are best) and you need to leave the cover on for a year or two. This mattress cover is a good use for small infestations in the mattress or box spring only. You can also pull furniture away from the wall to see the hiding spots for bed bugs. Vacuuming the bugs and disposing of the vacuum bag immediately and double bagging the vacuum bag will help with ridding yourself of the bugs. Trained professionals will be able to help fill void areas where bed bugs like to hide with silica gel or diatomaceous earth. Cleaning clutter from the floor or closet helps eliminate hiding spots. Heat treatment is a tool pest professionals have to safely heat a room to a required temperature for ridding homes of bed bugs. YOU SHOULD NEVER TRY THIS YOURSELF.

Question: I am interested in further education, where can I find that?

Answer: [NC Pest Management Program](#) has many trained entomologists. They often update their website. If you need further education about bed bugs at a local level, please contact us at the Gaston County Health Department at 704-853-5200 or by email at Christina.Rodite@co.gaston.nc.us.

Question: I am a renter of a property infested with bed bugs, where can I go for tenant- landlord disputes?

Answer: Please call the NC Department of Justice, Consumer Protection to file complaint or tenant-landlord disputes at 1-877-5-NO-SCAM or 919-716-6000. If your landlord is willing to treat your home for bed bugs, please follow the [guide posted by NC State's Cooperative Extension](#). This guide will help you prepare your home for the treatment. If you are a tenant you need to work with the landlord to clean and eliminate clutter. Bed bugs are difficult to control, and pest management companies cannot do it alone. Prepare yourself and your place for treatment because only an integrated approach is beneficial to the elimination of bed bugs.

Question: Who can legally apply pesticides on a property?

Answer: First of all pesticides are deadly for humans or animals if used improperly which is why we suggest using a trained professional. If you have any questions about pesticides, it is best to refer to the [NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services](#). Also contacting the [NC Public Health Pest Management](#) can provide further information.

Question: I have seen stores selling used mattresses, box springs, etc, can they do that?

Answer: Please refer to [NC Public Health Pest Management Sleep Products Program](#) or at 919-733-6407.

Question: Does the Gaston County Health Department inspect homes for bed bugs?

Answer: The Gaston County Environmental Health Division does not inspect private homes for bed bugs. Staff only inspects permitted facilities according to North Carolina Department of Environmental and Natural Resources Rules.

Please do not bring live bed bugs to the Health Department for identification.